
**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, September 14, 2009
5:00 p.m.
Human Resources
Pinnacle Training Room
7575 E. Main Street
Scottsdale, Arizona**



PRESENT: Enid Seiden, Chair
Linda Simmons, Vice Chair (departed at 6:57 p.m.)
Susan Galpin, Commissioner
Jeff Jameson, Commissioner (arrived at 5:27 p.m.)
Kuros Lamé, Commissioner (arrived at 5:39 p.m.)
Edward Lopez, Commissioner
Joel Martin, Commissioner

STAFF: Linda Walton, Staff Liaison
Velicia McMillan, Assistant General Manager, Human Resources
David Ellison, Assistant City Manager
Alan Rodbell, Chief of Police
Joanne Munar, City Auditor's Office

GUESTS: Bill Straus, Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League
Mike Seiden

1. **Call to Order:**

Chair Seiden called the meeting of the Scottsdale Human Relations Commission to order at 5:07 p.m.

2. **Review and Approval of Minutes:**

Ms. Walton noted that Joe Garcia also attended the last meeting.

VICE CHAIR SIMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 20, 2009 REGULAR MEETING, AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER LOPEZ SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0). COMMISSIONERS LAMÉ AND JAMESON WERE NOT YET PRESENT.

3. **Presentation on Hate Crimes and the status of Hate Groups in Arizona**

Mr. Straus described hate crimes as criminal acts that are motivated by the perception that the victims belong to one of the protected categories: race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. People have the freedom to hate, but they cannot translate that hate into criminal behavior. A person who is convicted of a hate crime can have their sentence extended by the judge. Hate crimes are the only crimes that send a message. The severity of injuries in a hate crime is greater, because they are crimes of passion. Most people within a protected group are aware of when a hate crime is committed against a member of their group.

Reactive defenders commit hate crimes when they feel that their sense of entitlement is being ripped from their grasp, and their culture is under attack. The rhetoric that was used against Irish immigrants in the 19th century is identical to the rhetoric that is being used against immigrant communities today. Reactive offenders do not necessarily have a criminal record, nor a record of bigotry and racism. They believe they are doing something to benefit their neighbors. The worst threat comes from mission offenders, who are not reacting to anything so much as responding to their own ideology. Though consisting of an extremely small number of people, one individual today can cause more destruction than entire armies used to be able to. In tough times, people look for easy answers by scapegoating those who are perceived to be different in some way. Mission offenders are generally mentally ill and feel personally instructed to do what they do.

Chair Seiden inquired whether he felt the President's race is contributing to the recent divisiveness in public discourse. Mr. Straus said there are a large number of problems surrounding illegal immigration today because the Federal government has failed to address the issue. The problems seem impossible to solve, and this has contributed to the rise of vigilante groups. Not everyone who is opposed to illegal immigration is a racist, but public confusion persists because extremist groups from both sides are determining the tone of the debate. Anti-government sentiment is growing rapidly, and is becoming dangerous. The President's race is a huge factor to some people, but the sentiment is much broader than that.

Mr. Straus said when the Sheriff is greeted by Nazi salutes, he has the responsibility to make a statement denouncing those groups. The First Amendment of the Constitution allows people to be really ugly and nasty, but they are protected as long as they obey the law. It is incumbent upon human relations commissions everywhere to recognize that. The joint HRCs tried to come up with an action plan, but the action almost seemed to punish people for their speech. Rather than enacting laws, the best course of action is to influence social opinion. It used to be socially acceptable, for instance, to drive drunk, but there has been a culture shift because of the social pressure exerted through public service announcements, and groups that are dedicated to opposing that type of behavior.

Commissioner Martin inquired about gang violence as a form of hate crime. Mr. Straus responded that gang violence is not considered a hate crime because the hatred is towards the gang itself, not to a particular protected group. Mr. Ellison inquired about the ADL's efforts to monitor current trends in Arizona. Mr. Straus responded by saying the ADL is not a human relations organization; it is a civil rights organization. The ADL has been admonished for past transgressions, and has subsequently become very conscious of abiding by the law. The ADL's monitoring efforts supplement those of law enforcement to keep track of international and domestic terrorists.

Ms. Walton asked what proactive efforts the Commission could take to inform the community about hate crimes. Mr. Straus felt that the best way to proceed would be to concentrate on schools, but he acknowledged even this would not be easy. He provided examples of how hate groups are using video games and music to specifically target young audiences. Chair Seiden inquired about the impact of the Cross Cultural Communication Series. Mr. Straus felt that the series is largely attended by people who already have received the message.

Ms. McMillan inquired about the Commission serving as a forum for the community to express their voice. Mr. Straus cautioned that if the Commission offers itself as a platform, it would also become a target as well. A regional effort might be more effective. He said democracy in the U.S. is not healthy right now. The addition of more political parties would stimulate American society.

4. **Regional HRC Meeting**

Chair Seiden reported on the Regional HRC meeting. Scottsdale chose not to support the joint statement, and the group ultimately rejected it. Staff was asked to create a strategic plan for a formal structure for the regional group. Without structure, the group cannot act in any capacity. Ms. Walton noted that the next Regional HRC meeting will be held in Scottsdale, and this topic will be on the agenda.

Vice Chair Simmons expressed concern about creating another layer of structure to accomplish something that has not been realized despite six months of effort. Commissioner Jameson noted that the Regional HRC is not empowered to do anything, since members have to go back to their own city for approval. Rather than craft a singular statement that would meet a generic standard, each group chose to go their own way to craft individual statements that would amount to a collective action plan. As an independent 501(c)3 organization, a regional group would not need to respond to political bodies. Ms. McMillan said the purpose of the regional planning effort was to allow the region's HRCs to leverage their resources on similar interests. It was not intended to circumvent the individual efforts of the member organizations.

Commissioner Galpin questioned the purpose of forming another group to rewrite a weak statement. Chair Seiden said the joint statement is dead. Commissioner Martin said a regional group would not require a formal structure, but should at least create a statement of intention to act quickly on a regional basis to address situations that are applicable to all members.

COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO HOLD THE NEXT REGIONAL HRC MEETING ON OCTOBER 19, 2009, IN LIEU OF THE REGULAR SCOTTSDALE HRC MEETING SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 12. COMMISSIONER MARTIN SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0).

Chair Seiden felt that the agenda should feature a speaker in addition to a discussion on how to handle future regional efforts. Ms. McMillan noted that without another meeting, the Commission would not be able to confirm the selection of a speaker. Vice Chair Simmons said the regional meeting should not be delayed until December, because it would be more appropriate to have it coincide with Chair Seiden's last meeting on the Commission.

COMMISSIONER MARTIN MOVED TO CONVENE AN AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR CHOOSING A PROGRAM AND A SPEAKER FOR THE REGIONAL HRC MEETING IN

OCTOBER. COMMISSIONER JAMESON SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0).

Chair Seiden and Commissioners Martin and Galpin agreed to make up the ad hoc committee.

5. Scottsdale Latin Jazz Festival/Hispanic Heritage Community Celebration

Ms. Walton noted that the Commission is collaborating with the Scottsdale Cultural Council on incorporating the HHCC in the Scottsdale Latin Jazz Festival. The event is planned for November 13 through 15. There will also be a business symposium on November 13, hosted by the Latin Business Council and the Minority Contractors Association. Scottsdale's Economic Vitality Division will provide support to that program.

Chair Seiden inquired about the proposal to sell tickets for \$10 each. Ms. Walton responded that the planners agreed to make complimentary tickets available at the Vista del Camino Community Center to families that might not otherwise be able to attend.

6. Cross Cultural Communication Series

Ms. Walton reported that planning continues on the CCCS. The series will launch in October during National Disability Month, and will feature five films, starting with *A Woman in a Bubble*. In November, the series features a screening of *What's Cooking*, which focuses on four ethnic families celebrating Thanksgiving. February will feature *Trouble the Water*, about a family that survived Hurricane Katrina. The last two films will be *Crossing Arizona*, about immigration, and *A Dream In Doubt*, a portion of which was screened at a recent Regional HRC meeting. Each film will be followed by a moderated discussion. Chair Seiden emphasized the need to provide captions. Commissioner Galpin suggested a sign language interpreter be present for the post-film discussions.

7. Unity Walk

Chair Seiden requested a volunteer to represent Scottsdale in the planning effort for the next Unity Walk. Commissioner Lopez volunteered. Ms. Walton said the event is planned for February 6, 2010. A keynote speaker is being considered. Scottsdale will be expected to provide entertainment for the post-walk party.

8. Community Partnerships

Ms. McMillan noted that community partnerships fall under the auspices of the HRC. Scottsdale is partnering with the Black Chamber of Commerce and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to create a Community Business Forum to be held at SkySong. A speaker will introduce the purpose of SkySong to the forum. Financial Services will make a presentation on the City's procurement process. Economic Vitality will discuss how to start a business in Scottsdale. The two Chambers are creating an invitation list that will include other business organizations in the Valley, not just their own members. The City will also advertise the event to the public. This will

provide a good opportunity for the Commission to become involved with community partners beyond the annual dinners and lunches. The event will be held on October 13.

Ms. McMillan noted that several of the City's elected and appointed officials who support the GLBT community have expressed concern about the City's participation in the Equality Arizona dinner. This year's event was politically charged, and they felt this puts Scottsdale in a difficult position regarding other groups that the City also supports. She inquired whether the Commission felt the City should approach Equality Arizona about this concern, or should another GLBT venue be chosen as a partner. Commissioners Lopez and Galpin requested more information on the specific complaints. Commissioner Lopez felt that the appropriate course of action would be to approach Equality Arizona with their concern and give them an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Ellison noted that as a cost saving measure, the City plans to send individual representatives to events, rather than sponsoring entire tables. This would also provide officials with opportunities to opt out of events they would feel uncomfortable attending. There are always more potential partners than resources. As City revenue continues to tighten, Scottsdale will have less money for these types of partnerships, and will have to demonstrate the tangible proactive and educational values that these efforts foster.

9. **Chair Reports**

Chair Seiden reported on a recent act of hateful vandalism that was perpetrated on a black couple and their guests. Fountain Hills rallied to support the families and to communicate that the community accepts everyone.

10. **Commissioner Items**

Commissioner Martin said she would be leading a diversity workshop on October 1 for the City of Phoenix that is designed to help diversify smaller arts and cultural organizations.

Commissioner Jameson emphasized the critical need to take the Commission's message to the schools. He proposed an agenda item on this topic for the next meeting. Commissioner Lamé suggested sending letters to the principals of all Scottsdale schools to make them aware of the Commission's mission. Commissioner Lopez proposed that it be a topic of discussion among the regional HRCs.

11. **Open Call to the Public (A.R.S. § 38-431.02)**

No members of the public wished to address the Commission.

12. **Staff Liaison Items**

Ms. Walton noted the City's effort to ensure that the activities of all boards and commissions support the City's General Plan. She highlighted several points of the plan that address specifically what the HRC is involved in. The City is also asking for the Commission's input on

revising the General Plan for the 2011 update. Advance Planning requests either the Chair or the Vice Chair participate in a working group of board and commission members on October 14.

13. **Adjournment**

With no further business to conduct, the meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A/V Tronics, Inc. DBA AVTranz.